

Who Was “Christopher Columbus”?



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Why did Columbus decide to make this voyage?

- Contrary to popular belief, Columbus was not looking for a new world or trying to prove that the world was round. Scholars already knew the world was a sphere and a new world was only dreamt of.
- The purpose of his voyage was to map out a new, elusive sea trade route to Asia.
- **King Ferdinand V and Queen Isabella I** were the rulers of Spain at the time and finally agreed to finance Columbus' voyage because it could severely boost Spain's economy, bring in gold, jewels, spices and slaves.
- Also, since all of the new land would be claimed for Spain and Columbus would discover the route (for Spain), the queen and king of Spain would have complete control of the trade route, making them even richer.

In 1492, Christopher Columbus began a journey across the ocean with three ships: **The Nina, Pinta and Santa Maria**

Why does this say about Columbus?



Some say...

- Times were changing in Europe, and Europeans like Columbus were full with curiosity about the world, and love for art and exploration.
- The **printing press** was invented in **1454** by Johannes Gutenberg, so people were becoming more literate and educated. They realized there must be more to the world than just the land they lived on.
- Columbus was courageous and brave, and wanted to discover new sea routes and other countries. He wanted to open up trade and help Spain!

Why does this say about Columbus?

Others say...

- Times were changing in Europe, but changes in technology is what compelled Columbus to travel to new lands (i.e., bigger guns that could be strapped to ships came about!)
- Columbus wasn't courageous and brave...he was greedy and only wanted to find gold in other lands! There was nothing romantic about him or his voyages.

In October of 1492, after months at sea, Columbus spotted land.

- Columbus thought he had reached the East Indies of Asia, and began a rapid search for the gold Marco Polo had described.
- Columbus named the people he encountered **Indians**, since he thought he was in the Indies.
- In actuality, Columbus was no where near the East Indies...

He had landed in present day Cuba and explored the Caribbean!



- Columbus' voyages across the Atlantic Ocean began a European effort at **exploration** and **colonization** of the American continent. While history places great significance on his first voyage of 1492, he did not actually reach the mainland until his third voyage in 1498.

Does Columbus deserve
credit for “discovering”
America?

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Some say YES!

Columbus bravely forged through terrible storms, used intelligent navigation, risked mutiny from his crew, yet never gave up until he landed in South America!

Does Columbus deserve credit for “discovering” America?

Others say **NO!**

Columbus was not the first person to step foot on America. He was just the first person with the right resources to make his landing public, and with the technology and greedy goal to change things there. He didn't even know where he was!

If not Columbus, who does deserve credit for discovering “America”?

- What about the “first people”, the **Native Americans** already living on the land?
- The **Norse**, also called **Vikings**, are also expected to have made voyages from their home in Scandinavia and Greenland to the American coast. Vikings were fierce warriors and sailors who traveled the sea fishing and exploring. It is believed that got as far down the coast as North Carolina years before Columbus.
- Some historians believe that seafarers from **Africa** and **Asia** made it to the America’s as early as 750BC.

If not Columbus, who does deserve credit for discovering “America”?

- After the four trips Columbus made to the New World from Spain, he died believing he had found a western route to Asia.
- Between 1497-1503, **Amerigo Vespucci** also crossed the Atlantic four times, and paid close attention to the plants and animals along the coast of today’s Brazil.
- Noting the vast difference in these plants and animals to those in Asia, Vespucci concluded that this land must be a new continent, previously unknown to Europe.
- In 1507, a German mapmaker drew the first map showing the “**New World**” as a great mass of land west of the Atlantic. He labeled it “**America,**” in honor of Vespucci.



What happened after Columbus landed?



While one of Spain's goals may have been to spread Christianity, Spain's sense of growing **national imperialism** and **economic competition** lead them to also seek wealth via the establishment of trade routes and **colonies**.

Interaction with Natives

- At first the exchange between the Spanish and Natives was peaceful.
- This changed as the Spanish formed settlements, displacing Natives from their homes.
- The Spanish also enslaved Natives, forcing them to search for gold and work in fields and mines.
- Native resistance was first passive (they refused to do the work). Then they began abandoning their settlements near the Spanish.
- Finally, the Indians fought back aggressively, but by that point they were weakened by the spreading of European disease and no match for European technology.
- In 1495, the Spanish on Haiti initiated a great slave raid, rounding up 1,500 Arawaks to be enslaved and sold.

Effects on the Native Population

- Estimates of Haiti's pre-Columbian population range as high as 8,000,000
- When Bartholomew Columbus (Christopher's brother) took a census in 1496, he came up with 1,100,000. Historians feel the number was closer to 3,000,000.
- By 1516, “thanks to the Indian slave trade and labor policies initiated by Columbus”, 12,000 remained.
- By 1542, only 200 were left. By 1555, the Arawaks were gone.
- As Native populations died out, Europeans supplemented slave labor with African slaves, beginning the Transatlantic slave trade.

“The Columbian Exchange”

In 1972, the historian **Alfred W. Crosby, Jr.**, proposed that Christopher Columbus's voyages to the New World produced even **greater consequences biologically than they did culturally.**

The **Columbian Exchange** is the term Crosby coined to describe the **worldwide redistribution of plants, animals, and diseases that resulted from the initial contacts between Europeans and American Indians.**

This process had a profound impact on both societies.



The Columbian Exchange

**Old World (Europe) to
New World (Americas)**

**New World (Americas) to
Old World (Europe)**

Diseases

Smallpox, Measles, Chicken Pox, Malaria, Yellow Fever, Common Cold, Influenza

Plants

Rice, Wheat, Barley, Oats, Coffee, Sugarcane, Bananas, Melons, Olives, Dandelions, Daisies, Clover, Ragweed, Kentucky Bluegrass

Corn (Maize), Potatoes (White & Sweet Varieties), Beans (Snap, Kidney, & Lima Varieties), Tobacco, Peanuts, Squash, Peppers, Tomatoes, Pumpkins, Pineapples, Cacao (Source of Chocolate), Chicle (Source of Chewing Gum), Papayas, Manioc (Tapioca), Guavas, Avocados

Animals

Horses, Cattle, Pigs, Sheep, Goats, Chickens

Llamas
Alpacas
Guinea Pigs

“Meet and Greet”

Disease

- Many of the diseases, such as syphilis, smallpox, measles, mumps, and bubonic plague, were of European origin, and Native Americans exhibited little immunity because they had no previous exposure to those diseases, resulting in a high and rampant death rate in Natives.
- Natives infected with smallpox would have first experienced flu-like symptoms (fever, body aches, fatigue, vomiting). This phase usually lasted several days(2-4.)
- Next, a rash emerges with small red spots on the tongue and in the mouth. These spots develop into sores that break open, and large amounts of the virus are spread into the mouth and throat. At this time, the person becomes highly contagious.



Disease

- Around the time the sores in the mouth break down, a rash appears on the skin, starting on the face, spreading to the arms and legs, and then to the hands and feet. Usually, the rash spreads to all parts of the body within 24 hours. As the rash appears, the fever usually falls and the person may start to feel better.
- By the third day of the rash, it becomes raised bumps. By the fourth day, the bumps fill with a thick, opaque fluid and often have a depression in the center that looks like a belly button (this is a major distinguishing characteristic of smallpox).
- Fever often will rise again at this time and remain high until scabs form over the bumps.
- Even today, no treatment is available for small pox other than management of symptoms.

Disease

- “The natives' lack of immunity to European diseases resulted in decreases among native populations that reached as high as 90 percent.”
- “Political and spiritual leaders died and left traditions in disarray; subsistence cycles were disrupted; family life was devastated. These losses put American Indians at a disadvantage when they fought to protect their lands or attempted to negotiate treaties with imperial powers.”
- “Largely immune to the diseases that corroded native life, Europeans were able to take and hold an advantage over the tribes, turning their attention to learning to use the domesticated animals and plants they encountered in the New World.’